

11.5 SUPPORT FOR THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

Attachments: 1. **Uluru Statement from the Heart**

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council

- 1. SUPPORTS the Uluru Statement from the Heart at Attachment 1 with the following actions:**
 - 1.1 acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners of this country and pay respect to their ongoing spiritual and cultural connections;**
 - 1.2 recognises the need for constitutional change that goes beyond the symbolic, and gives breath to the benefits that a treaty offers all Australians as we move towards a reconciled Australia;**
 - 1.3 endorses the Mayor submitting a letter to the Prime Minister and key Federal Parliamentarians expressing Council's support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart; and**
 - 1.4 requests that there is a focus on community engagement and awareness surrounding the Uluru Statement from the Heart as part of the annual NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week events.**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To seek Council support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart at **Attachment 1**

BACKGROUND:

On Friday 26th May 2017, Delegates of the National Constitutional Convention released the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for constitutional reforms to empower First Nations peoples so they can take their rightful place in their own country. It calls for a constitutionally guaranteed advisory body to provide advice to Parliament. The proposed body has no voting rights and will not alter the makeup of the Australian Parliament, but it will, for the first time, give First Nations peoples a voice to Parliament. It also seeks a Makarrata Commission to commence treaty negotiations engaging with all Australian governments.

There are three key elements to the reforms set out in the Uluru Statement. Only one involves a change to the Australian Constitution.

The Constitutional Change

Involves enshrining a First Nations Voice in the Australian Constitution that would empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

By Council endorsing this recommendation, the City would be recognising the need for constitutional change.

The Legislative Change

Involves the establishment of a Makarrata Commission. The Makarrata Commission would supervise a process of agreement-making with Australian governments.

The Commission

Would oversee a process of truth-telling about Australia's history and colonisation.

By Council endorsing Administration's recommendation to support the Uluru Statement, it would also confirm the City's view that a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, a treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and a process of Truth telling as outlined in the statement are a critical part of the Reconciliation process.

DETAILS:

The City's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2019 – 2021 that was endorsed by Council on 30 April 2019 (Item 9.4.1) has the following deliverable that is relevant to the Uluru Statement from the Heart:

Respect

Acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories

- *Investigate opportunities for the City and Council members to advocate for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution.*
- *Investigate opportunities for the City and Council to support the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart'*

In addition to supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart, it is also important for Council to support other organisations who have formed the same position and inform key bodies such as the Federal Government, Federal Opposition and WALGA of the City's position in the hope that these organisation will also form a similar position.

This report seeks to resolve an outstanding deliverable contained within the Innovate Reconciliation Plan 2019 – 2021. Council's endorsement of these recommendations provides the best opportunity for the City and Council to formally advocate for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution, demonstrate advocacy and leadership in the Local Government sector, and provide public support for our Whadjuk Noongar community.

Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners

The City currently acknowledges the traditional lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people in various ways, so this recommendation reinforces the City's existing commitment.

The City commenced its Reflect Reconciliation Plan in June 2017, concluding in June 2018. Following this, the City transitioned into the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan which it is due to complete in June 2021.

The City has taken many steps in recent years towards acknowledging the City's Aboriginal community and culture, including the establishment of the City's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, purchase of public artwork, celebrating and acknowledging significant days, including NAIDOC week and Reconciliation week, along with the symbolic protocol of continually flying the Aboriginal flag.

Acknowledgement of the First Peoples will be raised with the City's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group to seek guidance on how this action can be further embedded within the City's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan and the City's operations.

In 2018, the Cities of Bayswater and Fremantle joined other organisations across Australia to voice their support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Similarly, in the Eastern States, there are only a few local governments who have supported this statement.

Letter of support from Council to Federal Government and Parliamentarians expressing our support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart

If supported by Council, Administration would prepare a draft letter from the Mayor to the Prime Minister and relevant Federal Parliamentarians expressing Council's support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Educating our community

Administration would incorporate educational activities into NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week activities so that we can provide our community with information relating the significance and importance of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

CONSULTATION/ADVERTISING:

Nil

LEGAL/POLICY:

Nil

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Low: It is low risk for Council to support the Uluru Statement of the Heart

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS:

This is in keeping with the City's *Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028*:

Connected Community

*We recognise, engage and partner with the Whadjuk Noongar people and culture.
Our many cultures are celebrated.*

We have enhanced opportunities for our community to build relationships and connections with each other and the City.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

Nil.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS:

The City of Vincent's support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart will contribute to the increased emotional, mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our local Whadjuk Noongar community.

This also reflects the following objective in the City of Vincent's *Public Health Plan 2020-2025*:

Increased mental health and wellbeing

FINANCIAL/BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

There will be limited financial implications for the City with any expenses being able to be captured within the existing budget for Reconciliation.

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is *a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.